

Thinking outside the box

Boxing

Iain Withers

MATTHEW Chanda will step in to the ring tomorrow for the biggest fight of his career. The 21-year-old boxer from Dalston is competing in his first bout at the top level of amateur boxing, the ABA championships. Chanda has only fourteen fights under his belt but will now face some of the toughest and most experienced fighters in Britain. Dripping with sweat after a gruelling training session ahead of the fight, Chanda says he is ready for the step up. “Fear is not a factor for me. I’m nervous but I’m not scared. If I want to be the best, I’ve got to fight the best.” Chanda disappears to check his weight. His team has been battling to bring his weight down in time for the fight on Friday so that he can drop a weight category. He has dropped a kilo during this training session, but everyone is concerned that he has not brought his natural weight down below the 54 kilo limit. Chanda currently boxes in the 57 kilo featherweight category. But at 5 ft1 in he is six inches shorter than most of the boxers at his weight. His trainer Steve Kipps says this lack of reach sometimes shows in the ring. “Boxers at featherweight learn to keep away from him if they’ve got the fitness. He does sometimes come a cropper because of his height.” Chandra compensates with



Trainers at Chanda’s club say he is the most promising boxer to come out of Hackney since Ian Napa

blistering speed. In the ring he is a flurry of movement. Everyone at his gym calls him the ‘dynamo’. Haru Tomi has been sparring with Chanda for a year and says that he is stunned by his progress. “A year ago it was easy to read his movement. But now

he’s got a lot of tricks and excellent movement. His real strengths are stamina and power. I think he should turn pro soon.” It is these qualities that have secured Chanda two national youth titles and five London titles during his boxing career so

far. Crown and Manor boxing club has a rich history of producing champions, including British and European bantamweight title holder Ian Napa, and the buzz around Chanda is tangible. Chanda remembers sneaking to the club as a boy to watch Ian Napa. “My gran used to live quite

near the club. I’d come down as often as I could with my cousin to see Napa. We heard that he was the fastest puncher ever.” According to his coaches, Chanda is already up there with the best they’ve seen. Steve Kipps’ father Bob worked closely with Ian Napa and he believes the club may have another speed merchant on their hands. Chanda turned to boxing during a dark time in his life. He was beginning to get sucked into a gang and was falling out of school. His girlfriend gave birth to their child when he was 17. “I had to drop out of sixth form to work and look after my child. I took up boxing around then. It was the only time I had to myself. Boxing was a release for me. “A lot of friends have been murdered. I have to thank my missus and boxing, they both kept me out of trouble.” Chanda is now happily married to the mother of his child and has returned to education to train to become a teacher at Queen Mary’s University. The Crown and Manor boxing club has been providing activities and support to Hackney teenagers throughout its 90-year history. It means a lot to Chanda to be fulfilling a mentoring role at the club. He is highly ambitious about the future and hopes to win the ABAs on his first attempt, with a view to fighting in the Commonwealth games in 2010. “My ambition is to turn pro as soon as possible. Hopefully I’ll be fighting Ian Napa in the ring one day.”

Estate teens clean bankers off the pitch

Football

Daniel Igra

BANKERS and lawyers saw their stock fall further after being outclassed by a team of talented teenage footballers. Staff from two international banks and a City law firm were outdone by the Shoreditch starlets in a five-a-side football tournament designed to bring big businesses and underprivileged youths together. The competition had been under threat as turnout from City workers fell from last year and the winning team waited until the last minute to confirm their place. In the end five teams lined up on Monday evening, one each from Deutsche Bank, UBS and law firm Linklaters, and two from the Blue Hut youth group, the organisation behind the event. Made up of teenagers from the Murray Grove estate, Blue Hut Rangers proved to be a cut above the rest. Initially drawing blanks in goalless clashes with Linklaters and UBS, the Rangers took time to get into gear.



Linklaters after losing to the Blue Hut boys

But team captain Aaron Hughes, also on League Two side Dagenham & Redbridge marshalled his players to overcome Linklaters 2-1. The rematch in the final was a show of cultured passing and individual flair. Aaron, after lifting the cup, told the Hackney Post he thought the event was an “excellent” idea.

“It’s good that the businesses join in. I’ve done it a couple of times before and it’s always been fun,” he said. Clare King, manager of Blue Hut youth group, said she was “over the moon” that Aaron’s team had won. “They’ve played in every tournament since we started it up three years ago and this is the first time they’ve won. I’m so

pleased,” she added. But Amam Singh, of Deutsche, said turnout from the banks had fallen since he played his first tournament at Blue Hut three years ago. “I’ve done this about ten times. We used to have two

‘There is just not enough interaction with the children’

teams from UBS and Deutsche. Now we struggle to get one from each of them. “People are less interested in playing. I don’t think it should just be football. We need other initiatives – there’s not enough interaction with the kids. Mr Singh denied that it was to do with banks cutting down their outreach work. “People don’t bother coming because they’re working too hard or because it’s raining.”

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First team 40-year-old virgin

A FOOTBALLER who spent ten years trying to get into his club’s first team has made his debut within days of turning 40. Alan Cooley, a regular for Sporting Hackney’s second string, played the second half of a key cup first-team clash. Cooley said he was “over the moon” to take part in the 7-1 quarter-final demolition of Sudbury Court. “I’ve been working towards this moment for my entire career,” he said. The 40 year old, who prefers to play “in the hole” behind the strikers, said he had a “tear in [his] eye” before pulling on the first-team shirt – even though it was not the first time he had worn the kit. “That was actually the second team kit last year and the firsts nicked it.” First team manager Ben Watson said Cooley’s call-up was a reward for years of hard work. “Alan had been putting in some great performances at training and deserved this opportunity. Cooley hopes he play for the first team in a cup final. Sporting Hackney have qualified to the semi finals of two knockout competitions.